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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 003084

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2018
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: EMBASSY RAISES HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS WITH SENIOR
GOC OFFICIALS

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer
For reasons 1.4 B and D

¶1. (C) Summary: We recently raised specific human rights issues--including threats and violence against human rights defenders--with senior GOC officials. Colombian National Police (CNP) director Oscar Naranjo said the GOC has found that most threats against Bogota-based human rights groups were made by individuals and were not part of a systematic campaign. He said the CNP has broken up a narco-trafficking group behind threats against Catholic priests and social leaders in Bolivar, but conceded it has made little progress in solving robberies of human rights defenders in Bogota and Medellin. UN Human Rights Commission officials speculate that military intelligence may be behind the thefts, but concede they have no evidence. Presidential Human Rights director Carlos Franco and Naranjo reiterated their commitment to solve the murder of Bogota Municipal Workers Union President Guillermo Rivera, and to restore the displaced Afro-Colombian communities of Jiguamiando and Curvarado to their land. End Summary

¶2. (U) Polcouns raised threats and violence against human rights groups, as well as specific labor and land cases, with Colombian National Police (CNP) director Oscar Naranjo on August 6, and followed up with Presidential Human Rights Director Carlos Franco on August 18. Polcouns also discussed the threat issue with Medellin UN High Commission on Human Rights representative Felipe Sanchez on July 31.

Threats Against Human Rights Groups

¶3. (C) Naranjo distinguished between threats against human rights groups in Bogota and threats in other regions of Colombia. He said that CNP analysis of the threats in Bogota shows that 70% were from criminals, cranks, or members of the human rights groups themselves. These threats were not part of a systematic campaign to intimidate human rights groups, and posed little risk of real harm to human rights workers. The CNP continues to investigate the remaining cases, but has yet to find evidence that the "Aguilas Negras"--the group reportedly behind most of the threats in Bogota--exists as an effective organization in the capital.

¶4. (SBU) In contrast, Naranjo said the CNP recently arrested "Pablo Angola," a former paramilitary and narco-trafficker responsible for threats against Catholic priests and community leaders in southern Bolivar department. Medio Magdalena CNP Commander Rafael Rojas added that in addition to Angola, the CNP obtained 30 arrest warrants for members of Angola's criminal band--so far the CNP has detained 20. Despite these arrests, Rojas noted the volatile security situation in the Medio Magdalena region and said the CNP remains in close contact with Church and social leaders

on other possible threats. Naranjo said the CNP continue to investigate other threats outside of Bogota.

15. (SBU) In response to Polcouns' query, Franco said the CNP has reached out to Popular Women's Organization President Yolanda Becerra to provide her additional security. Becerra left Barrancabermeja, the headquarters of the group, to live in Bucaramanga following threats and a home invasion in her Barrancabermeja residence last November. Rojas confirmed this, saying the local CNP meets monthly with threatened human rights groups to discuss their concerns.

Robberies of Human Rights Groups

16. (C) Naranjo said the CNP has made little progress in investigating a series of break-ins of human rights groups' offices in Bogota due to the professional nature of the incidents. He noted that in the 1990s such break-ins were often conducted by military intelligence, but added that the CNP has found no evidence to support this theory in these cases.

17. (C) Medellin-based UNHCHR official Felipe Sanchez told us he doubts the various criminal groups operating in Medellin or Antioquia have the interest or capacity to attack human rights groups. In fact, alleged threats against human rights activists in Medellin have not produced any victims. Still, Sanchez said UNHCHR is concerned about recent robberies targeting human rights defenders in Medellin.

18. (C) In one case, Sanchez said two individuals who initially identified themselves as police tried to steal computer discs and identity cards from a human rights defender on the street. A patrolman intervened when he saw them chasing the activist, but later freed the two when they produced military identification cards, including one purportedly from military intelligence. He said in two other incidents, threats against human rights groups revealed a detailed knowledge of the human rights groups' organizations and occurred at the time of major human rights group marches.

National UNHCHR director Javier Hernandez speculated that these incidents--as well as other actions against human rights defenders--might be part of a military "psychological campaign" against human rights defenders, but conceded he had no proof.

Murder of Bogota Municipal Workers Union President

19. (C) Naranjo said the CNP investigation has not turned up any evidence to confirm union charges that police abducted Rivera. A video provided by Rivera's family reportedly showing police complicity does not, in fact, reveal any police role. Similarly, an alleged witness who claims to have seen policemen force Rivera into a patrol car refuses to talk with authorities. Franco and Naranjo acknowledged the only way to dispel allegations of police involvement would be to capture the perpetrators.

Jiguamiando/Curvarado

110. (SBU) Franco agreed the process of returning land to the two displaced Afro-Colombian communities in Choco continues to move too slowly. The delimitation commission reviewing the communities' boundaries has reportedly finished its work in Curvarado but not Jiguamiando, and a census to determine who belongs to the communities is still in process.

Agricultural Ministry officials claim the last titling issues were resolved last week, but the Ministry is still studying the best way to remove the illegal occupiers from the land. Naranjo conceded that security is also an issue, noting that they Army has a greater presence in the area than the CNP. Franco and Naranjo reiterated the GOC's commitment

to resolve these issues and restore the communities to their
land.
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